

# NATIONAL HONEY REPORT



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Agricultural Marketing Service  
Fruit and Vegetable Programs  
Market News Branch

Website: [www.ams.usda.gov/marketnews.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/marketnews.htm)

Issued Monthly

2202 Monterey St. Suite 104-F  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Phone: 559-487-5178 FAX: 559-487-5199  
Federal Market News Service  
21 North 1<sup>st</sup> Ave., Suite 224  
Yakima, WA 98902  
Phone: 509-575-2494 FAX: 509-457-7132

---

Number 8

For subscription information, please call 1-800-487-8796

September 10, 2002

---

**HONEY MARKET FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST, 2002**  
**IN VOLUMES OF 10,000 POUNDS OR GREATER UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED**  
- REPORT INCLUDES BOTH NEW AND OLD CROP HONEY -

Prices paid to beekeepers for extracted, unprocessed honey in major producing states by packers, handlers & other large users, cents per pound, f.o.b. or delivered nearby, containers exchanged or returned, prompt delivery & payment unless otherwise stated.

- ARKANSAS**            - Soybean, light amber, 93¢
- CALIFORNIA**        - Alfalfa/Cotton, light amber, 95¢ - \$1.00  
                     - Mixed Flowers, extra light and light amber, 88 - 98¢
- COLORADO**        - Clover, white, \$1.00
- FLORIDA**           - Gallberry, extra light amber, 93¢ - \$1.00  
                     - Gallberry, cut comb, \$1.40  
                     - Mixed Wildflowers, amber (bakery grade), 85¢  
                     - Orange Blossom, white, 92¢  
                     - Saw Palmetto, extra light amber, \$1.00 (small lot)  
                     - Saw Palmetto, light amber, 90¢ - \$1.10
- IDAHO**             - Alfalfa, extra light amber, 95¢  
                     - Clover, white, \$1.30 (delivered to east coast)  
                     - Clover, extra light amber, \$1.00 (small lot)
- ILLINOIS**         - Clover, white, \$1.00
- MICHIGAN**        - Clover, white, \$1.01  
                     - Floral Not Reported, extra light amber, 99¢
- MINNESOTA**      - Clover, white, \$1.00 - 1.05
- MONTANA**         - Alfalfa, white, \$1.00  
                     - Clover, white, 94¢ - \$1.13

<b>NEW YORK</b>	- Clover, white, \$1.03
<b>NORTH DAKOTA</b>	- Clover, white, \$1.35 (delivered to Florida)
	- Clover, white, \$1.40
<b>OREGON</b>	- Clover, white, \$1.10
<b>SOUTH DAKOTA</b>	- Clover, white, \$1.07 - 1.17
<b>TEXAS</b>	- Chinese Tallow, light amber, 95¢
<b>UTAH</b>	- Alfalfa, light amber, \$1.00
	- Clover, white, \$1.15
<b>WASHINGTON</b>	- Alfalfa, light amber, 86¢
	- Mint, amber, 85¢
	- Blackberry, white, \$1.00
	- Mixed Flowers, white, 96¢
	- Snowberry, extra light amber, 90¢
<b>WISCONSIN</b>	- Clover, white, 95¢ - \$1.00
<b>WYOMING</b>	- Alfalfa, extra light amber, 97¢

Prices paid to Canadian beekeepers for unprocessed bulk honey by packers & importers in U.S. currency, f.o.b. shipping point, containers included unless otherwise stated. Duty & crossing charges extra. Cents per pound.

<b>ALBERTA</b>	- Clover, white, \$1.05 - 1.32 (higher price for honey picked up in Canada)
<b>SASKATCHEWAN</b>	- Canola/Clover, color not reported, 99¢

Prices paid to importers for bulk honey, duty paid, containers included, cents per pound ex-dock or point of entry unless otherwise stated.

<b>EAST COAST..... URUGUAY</b>	- Mixed Flowers, extra light amber, \$1.01
<b>WEST COAST..... AUSTRALIA</b>	- Mixed Flowers, white, 75¢

**COLONY, HONEY PLANT & MARKET CONDITIONS DURING AUGUST****APPALACHIAN DISTRICT – (MD, PA, VA, WV) . . .**

The drought is still having negative affects on the bees in this area with respect to activity levels and nectar gathering. Many of the colonies are at low activity levels and are gathering very little nectar, but they are gathering some pollen. Inspectors and Extension Agents are recommending early feeding. This early feeding will hopefully increase activity and encourage fall brood rearing. Very little rainfall was received and it did help in the interim, but areas are needing from 10-15” of precipitation to come out of this drought. There are occasional reports of bees robbing other hives for food. Varroa mite problems are variable. The rain did help the bloom on some forage crops and wildflowers, which is about the only nectar source available and this is very variable and dependent on recent moisture levels. Everyone is hoping for lots of moisture for a good fall nectar flow to increase honey stores for overwintering.

**CALIFORNIA . . .**

The month began with a low pressure system that brought cooler temperatures and thunderstorms to the mountains. The hot weather returned and on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, Oakland posted consecutive daily record highs of 88 and 93 degrees. At the same time, several locations in Southern California also set records when they recorded temperatures over 100 degrees. The hot, dry conditions continued through the end of August with temperatures in the upper 90's to low 100's except along the coast and in the mountains. By the 11<sup>th</sup>, Southern California had six large wildfires burning and Oregon's largest fire on record had jumped across the border into Northern California.

In Northern California, the bees are reported to be in fairly good condition. The late summer honey crop has been extracted and producers were fairly pleased with the amount of honey they were getting. Very few floral sources remain but the bees did collect a little honeydew to keep them fed.

In Southern California, the bees are also in pretty good condition. They were setting in the mountains but all floral sources dried up so they were moved near irrigated crops in the valleys. Honey was still being extracted but even irrigated crops, such as alfalfa, are only yielding a crop about 50% of normal. A lot of beekeepers were feeding by the end of the month.

A few wax handlers were beginning to take in small lots of good, clean product. They are still offering higher prices if the wax is traded for merchandise rather than cash.

Packers are having a more & more difficult time finding honey, even at higher prices, to fill their orders. Some report they are concerned about staying in business if additional honey doesn't become available soon & prices stabilize.

**COLORADO . . .**

The water situation for the state has become a major issue for the main users of the cities and farmers. Some reservoirs that serve Denver and other major cities in the front range have been drained and their water diverted to lower reservoirs which are deeper and can hold more water. Most farmers that use water from rivers have received their last allotment for irrigation with about a month of the growing season still left to go. The stress resulting from the drought conditions has sharply reduced honey production for the state. Beekeepers are reporting production to be down from 25 to 50% of normal for all areas of the state.

**IDAHO . . .**

The weather in Idaho for the month of August was fair, ranging from the high eighties to mid-nineties. Most beekeepers report that the bees are in excellent shape. The wholesale market for honey is sharply higher as reports of small honey supplies come in from most areas of the country. The retail market was sluggish.

**ILLINOIS . . .**

Due to the favorable weather conditions over most of the state, beekeepers reported extraction activities were in full swing. The Central part of the state, mainly the Springfield area, reported the largest honey crop in the state. The fall honey flow from Goldenrod had begun over the state. The main floral sources were Goldenrod and late Clover crop and fall wild flowers.

Some beekeepers noted demand for local honey had picked up. Some fall festivals were to begin the last of the month heading into the Labor Day holiday.

The bulk honey and wax movement has begun to increase; however, prices offered by packers continued to be low. Retail sales were reported moderate.

**INDIANA . . .**

Bees were reported in very good condition as extraction had begun over the state. Most areas received adequate rainfall to promote an excellent fall honey flow from mainly goldenrod. Beekeepers put supers back on the hives because of the good fall flow.

The State Apiary inspector reported very little problems as hive inspections were winding down. The major concern was weak or low queen count in the colonies.

Wholesale honey sales was reported to be steady with consumer demand picking up at the retail level. Bulk sales were improving as demand by packers improved.

**MISSOURI & IOWA . . .**

August was generally a little warmer than normal for Missouri which received below average rainfall. Beekeeper were treating for Mites before the fall honey flow. Bee populations in the hives for the peak honey flow were generally good. Nectar flow was good in Southeast Missouri and Northeast Arkansas by the warm weather which caused some cotton and soybeans to shed blooms. Bees are plentiful going into the fall. Honey yields of the early harvest appear to be good. Honey in Missouri was fairly dry in most location of the hives. Much of the honey from the Missouri River Valley was generally dry. Honey from Iowa was generally fairly dry with fairly good color and quality.

**MONTANA . . .**

Temperatures the first two weeks were fairly normal with daytime highs in the mid-80's to upper 90's. Very little precipitation was recorded the first week but there was widespread showers the second week with Wolf Point, in the northeastern section of the state, the wet spot with over 4". Temperatures began to decline the middle of August with highs about 10 degrees cooler than the first of the month but headed back up through the end of August. Some areas in the southeast and south-central part of the state received much needed rain but it sometimes came with thunderstorms that brought hail that extensive crop damage. Great Falls was the exception when they recorded their second-coolest August on record with an average temperature of only 60.8 degrees.

Most crops are behind schedule this year so the rains helped both the bees and the plants make a recovery. The second cutting of alfalfa was just completed. By the end of the month, topsoil moisture was 26% very short and 38% short.

**NEW ENGLAND . . .**

Dry and hot weather continued for most of August. Temperatures for the first weeks ranged from the high 80s to the mid 90s with no significant precipitation. Rain and cooler weather reached the region in the last week, daily temperatures reached only into the high 70s and rain fell for most of the week. Precipitation was 2.13 inches for the month still only about 2 /3 of the normal rainfall for August.

Beekeepers had a quiet month, most reporting good results with there harvest, though some complained of the lack of available nectar due to the drought. Bees are mainly working Goldenrod at this time.

Demand for honey is reported to be good, with prices higher.

**NORTH CAROLINA . . .**

With the continuing drought situation in the State of North Carolina, some area water tables are getting dangerously low. The State has experience a long, dry summer. However, honey flow in the western part of the state has been good. Bees have been busy working goldenrod, Spanish needle and also some aster.

Beekeepers and apiary officials are preparing to work with the NC Mountain State Fair during the first part of September and the State Fair in Raleigh in October. Honey sales should be good during the month of October with the prediction of beautiful fall color due to the dry weather.

**OREGON . . .**

Temperatures were generally 1-6 degrees below normal across the state the first twelve days in August. Daily-record lows were recorded on the 8<sup>th</sup> in parts of Northeast Oregon when temperatures dipped below the freezing level. Only trace amounts of rain was received and with the exception of coastal areas and the Wilamette Valley, all other areas have received less than normal precipitation. Parts of the northeast corner of the state are over 8" below normal. Summer returned on the 13<sup>th</sup> bringing record highs to parts of the state. Eugene, in the Wilamette Valley, reached 104 degrees on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 100 on the 14<sup>th</sup>. Newport, along the coast, also set a record on the 13<sup>th</sup>, when they reached 99 degrees. Conditions remained mostly hot and dry through the end of August with highs ranging from the low 90's to low 100's. Only four weather stations in Eastern Oregon received at least 10" of rain this season. By the end of the month, topsoil moisture was rated at 44% very short and 45% short across the state.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, firefighters hoped to contain the 6-week old Biscuit wildfire in Southern Oregon. The fire consumed almost 500,000 acres. The end of August, there were still two other fires in Oregon covering nearly 80,000 acres.

The honey season was pretty much over by the end of the month as producers finished up or were about done extracting. Most commercial beekeepers report their crop is down this year while some hobbyist were getting over 100 pounds. After the honey is extracted, feed and medications were put on the colonies. Most floral sources had dried up by the end of the month except small amounts of wildflowers such as chicory, and a little pollen. Some of the feeding was done to keep the queen home where she will lay more eggs which gives you additional young, strong bees going into winter.

**UTAH . . .**

Beekeepers are yielding a better crop of honey then anticipated especially if they had irrigated land or were in the Northern part of the state. August was very hot with temperatures in the low to mid-nineties for most of the month. Wholesale honey price were sharply higher as packers try and secure supplies. The retail market was sluggish.

**WASHINGTON . . .**

Weather conditions the first few days of August were fairly normal with an occasional cool day mixed in with warm summer temperatures. No rain fell on either side of the state. Western Washington finally received some heavy rainshowers, some from thunderstorms, the second week in August, along with much cooler temperatures. The hot, dry conditions continued in Eastern Washington with daytime highs in the 90's. Record-breaking heat began to cause drought conditions, even in Western Washington. Twenty-seven new wildfires, mostly in Eastern Washington, were burning the middle of August. Some started when a windstorm knocked down power lines and transformers on the 16<sup>th</sup>. A dry summer last year combined with a hot, dry summer this year in Western Washington, was beginning to take it's toll on some plants. Native trees were beginning to shed their leaves due to a lack of moisture and livestock was fed hay to compensate for dried up pastures. Hay and corn crops are down as irrigation couldn't keep up. Central Washington also received little to no rain during August but adequate irrigation water supplies kept crops performing. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, Spokane's 1.06" of rain set a record but the showers only fell in that area. By the end of August, topsoil moisture was rated 57% short.

In Western Washington, most producers had finished extracting a fairly good crop but less than last year. Bees that pollinated cranberries and blueberries made the best crop this year. A few bees were sitting in the mountains for the fireweed but most of the plants dried up by the end of the month. The bees look good going into the fall season with plenty of winter stores. .

Bees that spent the summer sitting near irrigated crop and rivers in Central and Eastern Washington were still bringing in a little nectar from wildflowers and ornamentals. Those bees that were in North and South Dakota endured varying weather this summer with drought conditions in most of the region. They were still making a little honey as these states received a few rainshowers late in the month. Some honey was being extracted but later than normal. As soon as the honey is off, they will be taken directly to holding yards in California.

**WISCONSIN . . .**

Beekeepers began extracting honey and adding fall treatment for mites. Early reports indicate the honey & comb crops produced this year were of excellent quality. Moisture was running 16-18 per cent.

Some beekeepers reported the pollen crop going into fall has been good. Demand for pollen was very good.

Honey prices rebounded a little as honey demand has picked up. Bulk honey and wax movement remained slow with improved sales.

**U. S. EXPORTS OF HONEY BY COUNTRY OF DESTINATION, QUANTITY & VALUE**

	<b>J U N E</b>	<b>2 0 0 2</b>	<b>Y E A R T O D A T E 2 0 0 2</b>	
	QUANTITY	VALUE	QUANTITY	VALUE
	Kilograms	Dollars	Kilograms	Dollars
<b>HONEY, NATURAL, PACKAGED FOR RETAIL SALE -----</b>				<b>DOMESTIC MERCHANDISE</b>
Mexico	9,038	11,853	23,534	30,865
Cayman Islands	---	---	1,500	3,480
Barbados	---	---	1,090	2,875
N. Antilles	---	---	1,189	3,870
United Kingdom	18,659	42,250	18,659	42,250
Netherlands	---	---	1,843	9,202
Belgium	3,736	4,900	3,736	4,900
France	1,996	9,083	1,996	9,083
Germany	---	---	22,824	47,354

## Exports continued..

Kuwait	---	---	85,800	209,921
Saudi Arabia	---	---	114,583	224,042
Qatar	---	---	3,270	9,028
Arab Emirates	---	---	34,595	98,876
Yemen	---	---	120,675	295,500
Pakistan	---	---	16,850	16,652
Malaysia	7,385	9,686	7,385	9,686
Philippines	3,838	11,404	136,648	285,466
China	2,540	7,340	6,101	16,575
Korean Republic	---	---	147,857	193,947
Taiwan	---	---	5,269	10,059
Japan	---	---	81,745	194,652
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47,192</b>	<b>99,516</b>	<b>837,149</b>	<b>1,721,283</b>

**HONEY, NATURAL, NOT ELSEWHERE INDICATED OR SPECIFIED ----- -- DOMESTIC MERCHANDISE**

Canada	87,697	213,160	319,420	698,138
Mexico	---	---	91,373	140,580
Costa Rica	---	---	12,246	25,434
Bermuda	---	---	965	2,983
Guadalupe	---	---	3,018	8,233
Sweden	---	---	20,376	35,276
United Kingdom	---	---	76,508	169,865
Ireland	---	---	287	3,138
France	---	---	2,407	2,968
Germany	---	---	7,768	10,246
Spain	---	---	1,996	5,808
Yemen	---	---	41,071	91,876
Thailand	---	---	16,329	37,440
Malaysia	---	---	32,658	74,880
Singapore	15,240	45,150	33,834	100,865
Indonesia	---	---	28,032	73,248
Philippines	---	---	20,765	45,476
China	60,588	55,995	166,005	172,628
Korean Republic	2,400	9,384	14,669	55,336
Japan	---	---	37,951	70,433
Australia	---	---	13,426	30,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>165,925</b>	<b>323,689</b>	<b>942,304</b>	<b>1,863,575</b>

## Exports continued...

**HONEY, NATURAL, NOT ELSEWHERE INDICATED OR SPECIFIED ----- -- FOREIGN MERCHANDISE**

Canada	---	---	53,570	85,391
Germany	---	---	10,839	10,246
China	---	---	78,880	81,246
Japan	---	---	597	3,300
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>---</b>	<b>143,886</b>	<b>180,183</b>

## U. S. IMPORTS OF HONEY BY COUNTRY, QUANTITY AND VALUE

COUNTRY	J U N E 2 0 0 2			Y E A R T O D A T E 2 0 0 2		
	QUANTITY kilograms	CUSTOMS VALUE dollars	C.I.F. VALUE dollars	QUANTITY kilograms	CUSTOMS VALUE dollars	C.I.F. VALUE dollars
<b>NATURAL HONEY, NOT PACKAGED FOR RETAIL SALE - - - WHITE</b>						
Canada	338,931	675,111	679,386	6,526,325	11,312,923	11,410,516
Mexico	149,215	266,879	274,822	225,669	364,186	376,582
Chile	39,179	70,934	73,234	652,938	980,030	1,026,364
Brazil	---	---	---	305,960	411,209	440,449
Uruguay	---	---	---	19,722	34,908	58,208
Argentina	---	---	---	1,655,502	2,022,220	2,157,895
Denmark	---	---	---	13,365	30,793	32,593
United Kingdom	---	---	---	806	6,694	7,004
Germany	---	---	---	18,000	20,880	22,320
Czech Republic	---	---	---	17,104	23,096	24,761
Hungary	---	---	---	18,000	20,880	22,320
Poland	---	---	---	960	3,492	3,717
India	60,021	72,366	79,566	454,518	574,003	639,621
Thailand	---	---	---	985,780	1,188,800	1,272,426
Vietnam	325,040	420,161	456,490	364,480	465,277	506,566
China, Mainland	140	4,480	5,110	1,514,687	1,599,605	1,745,523
Hong Kong	74,840	85,626	95,559	74,840	85,626	95,559
Australia	78,880	105,699	107,980	78,880	105,699	107,980
New Zealand	---	---	---	1,950	7,800	8,128
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,066,246</b>	<b>1,701,256</b>	<b>1,772,147</b>	<b>12,929,486</b>	<b>19,258,121</b>	<b>19,939,532</b>

**NATURAL HONEY, NOT PACKAGED FOR RETAIL SALE - - - EXTRA LIGHT AMBER**

Canada	55,423	101,802	102,052	429,534	695,749	699,343
Mexico	266,791	484,950	501,868	677,894	1,081,782	1,127,441
Guatemala	20,100	24,657	26,733	20,100	24,657	26,733
Chile	38,617	68,262	70,562	521,765	766,348	796,144
Brazil	78,689	113,000	119,196	354,211	500,855	531,429
Uruguay	---	---	---	469,093	669,223	688,069
Argentina	---	---	---	119,715	144,298	152,237
Spain	---	---	---	20,880	32,431	33,131
Greece	---	---	---	1,032	4,718	4,861
India	---	---	---	80,752	101,177	105,483
Thailand	295,800	344,111	385,025	1,909,940	2,234,531	2,462,584
Vietnam	506,820	586,111	621,823	2,652,300	2,995,011	3,178,625
Malaysia	177,480	202,849	230,094	177,480	202,849	230,094
China	---	---	---	1,006,542	1,003,098	1,109,468
Australia	79,560	110,751	118,267	197,880	252,174	271,154
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,519,280</b>	<b>2,036,573</b>	<b>2,175,620</b>	<b>8,639,118</b>	<b>10,708,901</b>	<b>11,416,796</b>



Imports continued..

**NATURAL HONEY, NOT PACKAGED FOR RETAIL SALE - - - LIGHT AMBER**

Canada	60,293	117,185	117,475	180,324	350,938	353,163
Mexico	733,585	1,300,988	1,355,494	4,224,830	5,979,186	6,236,786
Guatemala	38,000	64,222	67,702	129,120	204,573	216,317
Peru	19,842	28,374	29,774	80,975	110,416	116,016
Chile	110,104	174,430	183,099	1,250,504	1,799,940	1,904,586
Brazil	67,577	90,516	95,838	538,327	680,924	729,718
Uruguay	682,115	1,201,250	1,224,561	4,500,268	6,853,201	7,132,375
Argentina	---	---	---	260,091	348,040	364,792
France	---	---	---	411	2,031	2,212
Germany	55,782	116,630	149,776	132,497	238,873	279,254
Switzerland	---	---	---	37,700	54,275	56,185
Spain	20,880	36,122	36,822	20,880	36,122	36,822
Romania	---	---	---	21,370	26,884	27,141
Bulgaria	---	---	---	20,233	26,424	26,426
India	167,400	227,646	243,587	926,531	1,192,803	1,314,937
Thailand	---	---	---	1,477,368	1,751,101	1,831,679
Vietnam	1,290,610	1,649,724	1,794,406	6,079,575	7,267,097	7,914,437
Malaysia	394,400	463,036	504,618	394,400	463,036	504,618
China	---	---	---	4,209,102	4,031,108	4,356,496
Hong Kong	---	---	---	37,120	41,203	45,657
Taiwan	---	---	---	2,700	5,615	5,923
Australia	216,301	273,499	293,54	1,561,785	1,947,617	2,099,779
New Zealand	---	---	---	600	3,806	3,865
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,856,889</b>	<b>5,742,622</b>	<b>6,095,706</b>	<b>26,086,711</b>	<b>33,415,213</b>	<b>35,559,184</b>

**NATURAL HONEY, NOT PACKAGED FOR RETAIL SALE – NOT ELSEWHERE SPECIFIED OR INDICATED**

Canada	46,474	73,132	73,467	413,475	605,990	609,371
Mexico	112,311	173,605	178,015	969,992	1,656,282	1,699,997
Dom. Republic	36,000	30,500	32,331	55,998	64,340	67,812
Brazil	19,720	25,296	27,457	97,520	119,205	130,762
Argentina	20,320	24,384	26,494	168,665	189,361	200,030
United Kingdom	672	2,349	2,523	672	2,349	2,523
France	240	2,163	2,230	2,238	14,562	16,629
Australia	---	---	---	2,364	14,020	15,279
Switzerland	---	---	---	7,829	55,506	57,800
Poland	---	---	---	1,080	2,634	2,946
Italy	3,402	6,000	6,117	18,889	19,370	20,489
Greece	---	---	---	375	3,000	3,279
Thailand	---	---	---	19,720	26,961	44,214
China	---	---	---	59,160	49,298	56,903
Hong Kong	---	---	---	3,906	5,147	6,397
Taiwan	---	---	---	4,694	21,237	21,898
Australia	---	---	---	324,880	403,290	430,947
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>239,139</b>	<b>337,429</b>	<b>348,634</b>	<b>2,150,457</b>	<b>3,252,552</b>	<b>3,387,276</b>

**U.S. Customs Service and Food & Drug Administration Uncover Dumping Scheme  
Involving Contaminated Honey Imports From China  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, August 28, 2002  
Contact: FDA: Kim Rawlings (301) 436-2288 - Customs: Dean Boyd (202) 927-8727**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The U.S. Customs Service (Customs) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) today announced that they have discovered bulk imports of Chinese honey that were contaminated with low levels of chloramphenicol (CAP), a potentially harmful antibiotic and unapproved food additive. The contaminated honey was detected during an investigation into a widespread scheme to evade payment of U.S. anti-dumping duties on bulk imports of Chinese honey. To date, the investigation has resulted in the detention of more than 50 containers of bulk Chinese honey at U.S. ports. In an effort to evade U.S. anti-dumping duties, this honey had allegedly been illegally transshipped through third-party countries on its way from China to America.

Some of the bulk honey in these containers has tested positive for chloramphenicol, an antibiotic used, in most cases, only to treat life-threatening infections in humans when other alternatives are not available. Use of chloramphenicol is limited because this antibiotic is associated with a very rare, but potentially life-threatening side effect - idiosyncratic aplastic anemia. For the very small number of people susceptible to this side effect, exposure to chloramphenicol could be serious. A "safe" limit of chloramphenicol for such people has not been established. Nevertheless, the probability of this reaction occurring in the general population from food exposure is thought to be very low.

To protect the public from unnecessary exposure to potentially harmful substances, food and animal feed products containing chloramphenicol are illegal in the United States. Currently, Customs is stopping all suspect bulk honey imports to this country for the FDA to determine whether they contain chloramphenicol. Any shipments containing chloramphenicol will be detained. The FDA is unaware at present of contaminated honey being on retail shelves, but is continuing its investigation into this matter. Thus far, no illnesses have been reported in association with the imported honey.

As part of the investigation, Customs & FDA agents during the past week have executed search warrants on businesses and residences in Los Angeles, Newark, Tampa & other locations. Australian Customs, Royal Malaysian Customs, and Royal Thai Customs have also executed warrants in Australia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Additional enforcement activity is anticipated in the investigation.

"This investigation should serve notice that U.S. Customs will not tolerate unfair trading practices, especially those that pose potential health risks to the American public," said U.S. Customs Commissioner Robert C. Bonner. "This case is an excellent example of cooperation between U.S. Customs, the FDA, as well as authorities in Australia, Thailand, and Malaysia." "We will continue to work with our federal and international partners to ensure that products that cross our borders meet our high standards for food safety," said FDA Deputy Commissioner Dr. Lester M. Crawford. "The FDA will take whatever action is necessary to protect the public health from these kinds of activities."

The probe into this scheme began primarily as a dumping investigation. Dumping of a product occurs when merchandise manufactured outside of the United States is sold in the United States at a price that is below the cost of production, or below the price sold in the foreign home market. Foreign manufacturers and/or importers may dump products on the U.S. market in order to gain market share because of political or social concerns or to maximize profits/minimize losses in production.

In Sept. 2000, several U.S. honey producers filed an unfair trade case alleging dumping of honey imports from China. In May 2001, the U.S. Commerce Department issued a notice of preliminary determination which required U.S. Customs to collect anti-dumping duties on imports of natural bees honey from certain Chinese companies. The duty rates increased between 34-184%. The U.S. Customs Attaché in Bangkok, Thailand, subsequently received information that certain honey exports from China were allegedly being illegally transshipped through Thailand en route to the United States. The purpose of the alleged transshipment scheme was to circumvent payment of anti-dumping duties on Chinese honey imports to the United States. In June 2002, U.S. Customs Attachés in Bangkok and Singapore launched an investigation and began working with their law enforcement counterparts in Australia, Malaysia, & Thailand. Officials from the Royal Thai Customs, Royal Malaysian Customs & Australian Customs provided substantial assistance. Several domestic U.S. Customs offices joined the investigation, including those in Los Angeles, Newark, Tampa, Houston, Detroit & Seattle. Soon, Customs agents found that U.S.-bound Chinese bulk honey was allegedly being transshipped through Australia, Mexico, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam & other nations to evade U.S. anti-dumping duties. During the investigation, Customs officers in Los Angeles drew samples of bulk Chinese honey from several detained containers that had arrived at the local port. A laboratory analysis found that the honey samples contained chloramphenicol. Customs notified the FDA, which immediately joined the investigation given the health issues associated with chloramphenicol. Analysis by FDA laboratories confirmed the presence of chloramphenicol in the imported Chinese honey.

Since the discovery of chloramphenicol in the Chinese honey imports, Customs has been stopping all suspect bulk imports of honey for the FDA to test for the presence of chloramphenicol. The FDA has developed a method to confirm chloramphenicol levels in honey at one part per billion. The FDA & Customs are continuing to coordinate their enforcement strategies & will be detaining or seizing any honey imports that contain chloramphenicol to ensure that they are not released for human or animal consumption in the U. S.

---